

➤ FIRST & LAST

Strategies For Daily Use

FIRST AND LAST: a strategy in which people who think differently deeply connect to one another's points of view, strengthening mutual understanding and trust among participants.

This strategy can be used in response to any essential question and at any time in a lesson or inquiry –

- At the beginning, it allows people to surface the background knowledge and perspectives they bring with them.
- In the middle, it supports participants to explore ambiguity and clarify key concepts, principles, and points of view.
- At the end, it supports learners to synthesize and personally respond to the learning they have been investing in.

The instructions are very important! When followed, participants report feeling safe, heard, valued, affirmed, connected, and inspired. Each and every voice is centered; no one is on the margins. The quality of relationships among ideas and participants that students experience within the holding environment of this strategy transfers to the learning community itself.

When students engage in this strategy consistently over time, empathetic listening and cultural humility become collective commitments and efficacies.

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MATERIALS: sticky notes, smooth stones (for talking circles), chairs/tables/space for students to sit in small circles

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Provide prompt in the form of an open-ended question or provocative statement.
2. Invite participants to record what they think and wonder in response.
3. Have students sit in groups of 4-6 in a circle, with sticky-notes in hand.
4. Using rock-paper-scissors or another method, determine who will go first in each group. Ask this person to choose a talking circle stone (which will be held by the speaker and then passed clockwise to the next person throughout the process).
5. Explain that statements must be limited to one sentence only with no dialogue or discussion after/in between statements. The first person will state their idea/response, then pass the stone to the person on their left. This person will build upon, elaborate, and connect to the first speaker's idea and then pass the stone to the peer to their left who will repeat the process until the stone is placed once again in the first speaker's hand.
6. When the stone comes back again to the first speaker, they will state a sentence that incorporates concepts and knowledge that peers have offered in the circle.
7. The first person then passes the stone to the peer to their left, who becomes the new "first and last."
8. Repeat the process until every person in the group has been the "first" and "last."

AFTER THE CIRCLE, STUDENTS CAN:

- independently complete "I used to think, Now I think" (which could turn into the snowball activity)
- have a small group discussion, then share key insight and question with larger group
- enter into a related GRASPS tasks the teacher offers at this point . . .